



BOOK REVIEW

Acupuncture: An Aid to Differential Diagnosis

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There has long been a need for a concise handbook of Chinese medicine that would help the student and recently qualified practitioner to memorise the huge amount of information needed to practise ... Susanna Dowie has compiled such a handbook in a masterly way.

Giovanni Maciocia (Foreword)

This is a very clever “little” book, printed on plastic-coated paper. Each page is split horizontally in two, so that there are in effect twice as many pages as stated above. The upper pages cover the differential diagnoses of 50 common conditions in alphabetical order, with the Western differentiation of each on the left hand page and the Chinese on the right. The lower pages list 100 patterns, grouped by Zangfu.

Susanna Dowie has practiced as an acupuncturist for over 20 years in the United Kingdom and Australia. For the last 16 years, she has lectured at the London College of Traditional Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, of which she has been a Principal since 1995. She was also the first Chair of the Council of Heads of Acupuncture Colleges in the United Kingdom. She is, therefore, well placed to understand the needs of students and “practitioners still finding their feet”.

Given the space restrictions (only 200 words on each half-page), the differentiations are necessarily succinct, but sufficient. The Chinese diagnoses

usually include the etiology and a list of the associated Zangfu patterns, and the Western diagnoses (written in conjunction with a conventional medical doctor also trained in acupuncture) are well structured to be comprehensible to those who think more easily in Chinese medical language than the biomedical. The patterns follow a standard outline: etiology, underlying or accompanying pathology, signs and symptoms, pulse, tongue and treatment principle, with suggestions on acupuncture and herbal treatment. In general, the language is clear and, if her sources have disagreed on translation, the author has resorted to Wiseman’s terminology. She has also included a brief glossary (including both Pinyin and Chinese characters).

It takes a short time to adjust to the format of four pages to a spread, rather than the usual two, but once familiar, it certainly makes cross-referencing between differentiations and syndromes relatively simple.

Such quibbles aside, I think that “Acupuncture: An Aid to Differential Diagnosis” will be a very useful book for those who require a handy aide-mémoire in the treatment room. When I trained, I created my own (now very battered) notebooks as learning aids to read on trains and buses and to remind myself what I was supposed to be doing in the clinic. Susanna Dowie has distilled a wealth of information to provide an off-the-shelf version of this.

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Biography

David Mayor is an acupuncturist in Hertfordshire, England and an undergraduate and Masters research supervisor at the London College of Traditional Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. He is also editor of the textbooks “Electroacupuncture: A Practical Manual and Resource” (Churchill

Livingstone, 2007), “Clinical Application of Commonly Used Acupuncture Points” by Li Shizhen (Donica, 2007), and “Acupuncture in the Treatment of Musculoskeletal and Nervous System Disorders” by Lü Shaojie (Donica, 2009). See www.welwynacupuncture.co.uk for more information.

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